

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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R 130630Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 895
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 3564

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR(08,5, PK, US
SUBJ: ALLEGATIONS PERSIST OF US SUPPORT FOR PAK OPPOSITION

1. FIVE WEEKS AFTER THE PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTIONS, REPORTS PERSIST HERE AND ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY THAT USG IS FINANCIALLY BACKING AND OTHERWISE SUPPORTING OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE. THESE REPORTS, WHICH INCLUDE SUCH WILD STORIES AS ONE WE JUST HEARD TODAY ALLEGING THAT AMBASSADOR BYROADE WAS BEING EXPELLED BY THE GOP FOR HIS ROLE IN BANKROLLING THE PNA, ARE CIRCULATED ALMOST ENTIRELY BY WORD OF MOUTH. WE HAVE SEEN ONLY A HANDFUL OF PRESS ITEMS MAKING THE CHARGE EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY. DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF THESE ALLEGATIONS IN PRINT, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT LARGE NUMBERS OF POLITICALLY-AWARE PAKISTANIS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THEM, AND THAT MANY EITHER ACCEPT THEM AT FACE VALUE OR ARE NOT EASILY
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PREPARED TO DISMISS THEM AS THE NONSENSE THEY ARE.

2. THE CIRCULATION OF SUCH RUMORS, AND THE ACCEPTANCE THEY SEEM TO HAVE WON, COMES AS NO SURPRISE. THE PHENOMENON IS HARDLY A NEW ONE HERE. PAKISTANIS TEND NATURALLY TO VIEW POLITICS IN CONSPIRATORIAL TERMS, AND THE NOTION OF SINISTER FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN PAKISTAN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS HAS BEEN

TROTTED OUT REPEATEDLY IN THE PAST. AS WE HAVE MENTIONED BEFORE, THE APPARENT ABILITY OF THE PNA TO GARNER MORE CAMPAIGN FUNDS THAN ITS OWN SLENDER RESOURCES SEEMINGLY MADE POSSIBLE ADDED TO THE NATURAL SUSPICION THAT A FOREIGN HAND WAS INVOLVED. THE WIDELY-HELD AND LONG-STANDING BELIEF THAT AIR MARSHAL ASGHAR KHAN WAS SOMEHOW "CLOSE" TO THE US, THE ALLEGATION THAT THE US WOULD NATURALLY PREFER A "CONSERVATIVE" PNA REGIME TO THE "PROGRESSIVE" AND ACTIVIST BHUTTO GOVERNMENT, AND THE SUPPOSITION THAT THE USG WOULD SEE IN THE DOWNFALL OF BHUTTO AN OPPORTUNITY TO HALT THE PAK-FRENCH REPROCESSING DEAL APPEAR TO HAVE HELPED BOLSTER THE IDEA OF US INVOLVEMENT. THE DELAY -- AS IT SEEMED TO MANY PAKISTANIS -- IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S SENDING A CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE TO BHUTTO UNTIL THE PM WAS ACTUALLY SWORN IN FOR A SECOND TERM ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPRESSION HERE THAT THE US WAS SIDING WITH THE OPPOSITION. (THE FACT THAT OTHER MAJOR POWERS ALSO WAITED AND DID NOT CONGRATULATE BHUTTO IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MARCH 7 PPP ELECTION VICTORY WAS OVERLOOKED, AND MUCH WAS MADE OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN OUR SILENCE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PAK ELECTION AND OUR ENTHUSIASTIC PUBLIC REACTION TO THE INDIAN RESULTS A FEW WEEKS LATER.)

4. THE HAND OF THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT IN ALL OF THIS IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE. WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED (IN ISLAMABAD 2888) H.K. BURKI'S PROVOCATIVE MARCH 26 PAKISTAN TIMES ARTICLE, WHICH COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN PRINTED WITH GOP APPROVAL. IN HIS INAUGURATION SPEECH A COUPLE OF DAYS LATER, BHUTTO OSTENSIBLY EXONERATED THE USG, AND OTHER POWERS, OF CHARGES OF FINANCING THE OPPOSITION. BUT THE WAY THE PM

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DISCUSSED THE ISSUE, LED MANY TO CONCLUDE THAT WHAT HE ACTUALLY MEANT TO CONVEY WAS THAT THE US HAD BEEN INVOLVED. THE PM'S REMARK THAT "IF WE GET HALF OF THE 25 CRORES OF RUPEES" -- \$25 MILLION, THE AMOUNT THE PM SAYS THE OPPOSITION BOASTED OF RECEIVING ABROAD FOR THE ELECTIONS -- "WE WILL BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS EVEN HUMAN RIGHTS" IS STILL CITED AS EVIDENCE FOR THIS CONCLUSION. (THE EMBASSY DOES NOT SHARE IT.) MORE RECENTLY, CONGEN KARACHI REPORTED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER AZIZ AHMED ADDRESSED ARMED FORCES OFFICERS THERE AND TOLD THEM THAT THERE IS PROOF THAT THE US PROVIDED 280 MILLION RUPEES TO THE PNA. THE WELL-INFORMED REUTERS CORRESPONDENT HERE TELLS US THAT AZIZ AHMED MADE A SIMILAR ALLEGATION TO AN OFFICERS' GATHERING IN MULTAN.

5. WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE WITH GOP OFFICIALS AND SEE LITTLE PURPOSE IN DOING SO. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE ALLEGATIONS HAVE LED TO ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE US OR THAT THEY HAVE CREATED AN ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH AMERICAN LIVES OR PROPERTY ARE ENDANGERED.

BYROADE

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Message Attributes

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